1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

Havik subdivisions. Similarly, Poleya is a blanket term for anyone of the following Untouchable sub-castes, Kembaṭṭi, Aḍiyas, Pāleya, Poleya, Kukka Poleya, Baḍaga Poleya, and Mādiga. Pāleyas are split into further subdivisions.

The Brahmins, Kaṇiyas, and Baṇṇas (or Paṇikas) are the three castes with whom Coorgs come into contact mostly in ritual contexts. The Brahmins are priests not only in the great shrines at Tala Kāvēri, Bhāgamanḍla, and Irpu, but also in numerous small temples scattered all over Coorg. Coorgs from every part of Coorg go on pilgrimage to the great shrines, and at Bhāgamanḍla, where the Kāvēri and Kanaké meet, it is customary for them to offer balls of rice to their ancestors under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

In those villages where a Brahmin is functioning as priest he is paid annually, at harvest time, a certain quantity of paddy by every house in the village. In this respect he is treated like the barber, washerman, smith, and others. The priest is an essential member of the village organization.

In addition to being priest of the village temple, the Brahmin performs certain ritual services for Coorgs. These services vary from one part of Coorg to another, and not infrequently from one joint family to another: Coorgs in Kiggaṭnāḍ, for instance, are more Sanskritized in their ways than Coorgs elsewhere, and again some Coorg families are more Sanskritized than their neighbours. But everywhere the Brahmin priests perform certain minimum duties: at *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs, he comes with consecrated water which he gives the members to drink, and also sprinkles a little of it on certain parts of the house. When a wedding takes place in a Coorg house, he comes to bless the bridal pair and give them consecrated water.

The formation and crystallization of the division of Amma Coorgs is itself an acknowledgement of the strength of the influence of the Brahmins on Coorgs. But the Brahmins do not always operate at the Sanskritic level. Nearly a hundred years ago Dr. Moegling wrote that Coorgs were greatly afraid of the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara.

> The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say that if one of the Tantri Brahmins be offended and curse a man he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of the masters of the black art to say to a man, 'do you

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not see?' or 'do you not hear?' and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or even death.[1]

Occasionally temples dedicated to Bhagavati or Bhadrakāḷi were under the control of Tantri Brahmins in South Canara. The latter had the right to appoint the priest and oracle to each of these temples: the priest was a Brahmin while the oracle belonged to any high caste like Coorgs.

The Tantri Brahmins knew the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple and consecration of images. They visited the temples under their management once every few years when their Coorg followers made money-offerings to them. Moegling tells us that a single such visit would yield the priests between Rs 200 and Rs 300, a substantial sum in those days, and which testifies to the hold exercised by the Tantri Brahmins over Coorgs.[2]

The fact that the Tantris sanctioned the institution of oracles at their temples shows the extent to which they had compromised with non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation:

> Some Coorg is also chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a large number of candidates prese ted by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some *mantra* and puts some holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.[3]

The Kaṇiyas are another caste with whom Coorgs come into intimate contact in ritual contexts. They are astrologers and magicians from Malabar who have settled in Coorg for a long time, and their hold on Coorgs was very much greater in the past than it is today.

Every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment, or it will fail. Only the Kaṇiya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology. The first ploughing of the rice-fields, the first sowing, and the cutting of the sheaves have all to be performed during auspicious periods. A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day and at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually

[1] *Coorg Memoirs*, pp. 56–57.
[2] Op. cit., pp. 56–57.
[3] Moegling, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

the house or by a visiting neighbour whether male or female with great respect. The young man lays aside whatever burdens his hands, puts off his shoes and with folded hands first raised to the forehead, bows down and touches the feet of his senior, who lays his hand on the young man's head pronouncing a blessing, when the youth rises and repeats the ceremony to others.

The Coorgs are a hardy race and bear with fortitude a great deal of hardship, especially during the monsoon, whilst engaged with their rice cultivation. Exposed to wet and cold and often prostrate with fever, they soon regain their strength and old men and women of 70 or 80 years are not uncommon amongst them.

In the times of their Rajahs, during their wars with the Mysoreans and Malabars and in their marauding expeditions the Coorgs proved themselves brave soldiers and were dreaded for their fierce intrepidity; but their strength lay especially in their mountain fastnesses and behind the shelter of their native woods and the formidable breastworks extending for miles along the crests of hills. Since they have come under the rule of the British Government their warlike spirit has found no scope; but they are still a brave and manly race, who in time of need would doubtless stand by their new rulers with devoted loyalty. At the hunt of the tiger, the bison or the elephant no true Coorg shirks the dangerous sport; but with nerve and coolness and wary cunning he will dodge the advancing beast and with keen eye and steady hand fire at him at close quarters.

The intellectual and moral faculties of the Coorgs have for ages been neglected, and consequently up to the present day they are both ignorant and superstitious. The worship of demons and of departed spirits has usurped among them the worship of God. Charms and sorceries abound all over the country. Disease among men and cattle is readily ascribed to the Curses and witchcraft of enemies.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

c. **The Bhagavati-feast.**

Of the two lesser annual festivals one, the Bhagavati-feast, has been introduced by Tulu Brahmans, or, if it was originally a Coorg observance, has been thoroughly brahmanized.

It takes place during the two months preceding the monsoon. Different localities differ in the time of its celebration. Two or three villages have one Bhagavati temple in common, and support it jointly. These temples are in charge of Brahmans entirely. Tulu Brahmans hold the livings; with them some Padárthis, a lower class of Brahmans, who wear no holy string, are associated as musicians to Bhagavati. The whole establishment is under the management of some Tantri-Brahmans in the Tulu country, who come every eighth or tenth year, to consecrate idols and to collect money. On these occasions large sums are offered by the superstitious. The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say, that if one of the Tantri-Brahmans be offended and curse a man, he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of these masters of the black art, to say to a man: "do you not see?" or "do you not hear?" and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or deafness, or even death. Strange! It would appear, that the common worship of the great gods of the country was less degrading to the mind, and engendered a more cheerful kind of superstition, than this wild sort of idolatry, which has enslaved the poor Coorgs. The Tantrics, on one of their visits, will gather some two or three hundred rupees from the money-loving Coorgs. Sometimes an idol of Bhagavati has lost its power, when they re-enliven it. Or the officiating Brahman, who has played the possessed on festival days, has died. The Tantri has to appoint his successor. These services are not performed gratuitously; the presiding Tantri receives every year one half of the profits of the establishment, through a curate whom he leaves in charge.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

and the poor wretch will rot away by degrees. To prevent such disasters, the Náta place is marked by a little stone enclosure. During the month of Scorpio (November—December) a lamp is lighted every evening to the Náta, and cocoanuts are offered as oblations.

c. Astrology and Sorcery.

The ministers of Coorg superstition, the Kanyas, Panikas, Malcyas and Bannas make a handsome livelihood. The Kanyas find much work for the conjuring confraternity, dependent, in a great measure, upon their friendly patronage. The Kanya (astrologer) has complete mastery over the minds and, to a great extent, over the pockets of the credulous Coorgs. For a consideration in the shape of a purse of rupees, he writes the horoscope of the individuals who apply to him. Such is his cleverness, that he requires only to know the name of a person, in order to calculate the year, month, day and hour of his nativity. He is also the oracle of the Coorgs in cases of sorcery and witchcraft. It is believed by the Coorgs, that misfortunes, such as diseases of men or cattle, and deaths in the family or the herd, rarely come upon them in the natural order of things. The knowledge of an all-ruling Providence seems to have no place in their minds. Every severe affliction or great loss is ascribed to magic art or "an enemy hath done this." To find out the author of the mischief, and to induce or force him to keep the peace, is the only method that suggests itself to such people for obtaining deliverance from trouble. Application is made to some famous Kanya, who consults his books and caudies (little shells used for dice), and discovers the secret enemy's place, house, stature, age, etc. The man is called before a Panchâyat, and the case is discussed in the Parpatigára's Cutchéri. If things are not settled before this tribunal, the parties go to the Subadar, and frequently the quarrel is carried before the

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

Superintendent, who has to get out of the difficulty as best he may. By the Panchâyat's self-constituted authority the wizard, or the person who has employed sorcery against his enemy, must promise to abstain in future; and in many cases reparation of some kind or other is made. In the days of the Rajahs such crimes were often punished with death. The British Government cannot, of course, follow the precedent. By a matter of fact order (No. 32 of 1858) from the Honorable Court of Directors to the Government of India: "Such "an offence as sorcery ought not to be recognised by any "British tribunal. If a pretended sorcerer is accused of "really injurious practices against the person or property of "any one, he shall be tried for these practices and if found "guilty punished accordingly and not for sorcery. The pre-"tended exercise of supernatural powers should be in itself "an offence and should be punished as a form of Fraud."

d. Substitutes for human sacrifices and other peculiar rites.

As among other Dravidian mountain-tribes, so also in Coorg, tradition relates, that human sacrifices were offered in former times, to secure favour of their *Gráma-Dévatas: Máriamma*, *Durga* and *Bhadra-Káli*, the tutelary goddesses of the Sakti-line, who are supposed to protect the villages or nâds from all evil influences. In Kirindádu and Koninchéri-gráma in Katiednád, once in three years, in December and June, a human sacrifice used to be brought to Bhadra-Káli and during the offering by the Pánikas the people exclaimed "Alamma!" (álu-amma i. e. a man oh mother!) Once a devotee shouted: "Alallamma, ádu!" i. e. "not a man, oh mother, a goat," and since that time a he-goat without blemish has been sacrificed. Similarly in Bellúr in Távaligherri-múrnád of Kiggatnád-ta'uq once a year by turns from each house a man was sacrificed by cutting off his head at the temple; but

[Errata: This should read "The favour", see Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473 -- Analyst]

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has been sacrificed. Similarly in Bellur in Tavaligeri-Murnad of Kiggatnad taluq, once a year, by turns from each house, a man was sacrificed by cutting off his head at the temple; but when the turn came to a certain home, the devoted victim made his escape into the jungle. The villagers, after an unsuccessful search, returned to the temple, and said to the pūjārī 'Kalak Adu,' which has a double meaning, *viz.* Kalak, next year, Adu, we will give, or Adu, a goat, and thenceforth only scapegoats were offered. The devotees fast during the day. The he-goat is killed in the afternoon; the blood is sprinkled upon a stone, and the flesh eaten. At night the Panikas, dressed in red and white striped cotton cloths, and their faces covered with metal or bark masks, perform their demoniacal dances. In Mercara taluq in Ippanivolavade, and in Kadikeri in Halerinad, the villagers sacrifice a Kona or male buffalo instead of a man. Tied to a tree in a gloomy grove near the temple, the beast is killed by a Mēda (a wandering tribe, who are basket and mat makers), who cuts off its head with a large knife, but no Coorgs are present at the time. The blood is spilled on a stone under a tree, and the flesh eaten by the Mēdas. In connexion with this sacrifice there are peculiar dances performed by the Coorgs around the temple, the *kombata* or horn dance, each man wearing the horns of a spotted deer or stag on his head; the *pili-ata* or peacock's feather dance, the performers being ornamented with peacock's feathers, and the *chauri-ata* or yak-tail dance, during which the dancers, keeping time, swing yak-tails. These ornaments belong to the temple, where they are kept.

"In some cases where a particular curse, which can only be removed by an extraordinary sacrifice, is said by the Kaniya[1] to rest upon a house, stable, or field, the ceremony performed seems to be another relic of human sacrifices. The Kaniya sends for some

[1] The Kaniyas are religious mendicants, said to be descendants of a Malayali Brāhman and a low-caste woman.

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782 of his fraternity, the Panikas or Bannus, and they set
754 to work. A pit is dug in the middle room of the house, or in the yard or the stable, or the field, as the occasion may require. Into this one of the magicians descends. He sits down in Hindu fashion muttering mantrams. Pieces of wood are laid across the pit, and covered with earth a foot or two deep. Upon this platform a fire of jack wood is kindled, into which butter, sugar, different kinds of grain, etc., are thrown. This sacrifice continues all night, the Panika sacrificer above, and his immured colleague below, repeating their incantations all the while. In the morning the pit is opened, and the man returns to the light of day. These sacrifices are called *maranada bali*, or death atonements. They cost from ten to fifteen rupees. Instead of a human being, a cock is sometimes shut up in the pit and killed afterwards.

755 "In cases of sore affliction befalling a whole Grāma
782 or Nād (village), such as small-pox, cholera, or cattle disease, the ryots combine to appease the wrath of Mariamma by collecting contributions of pigs, fowls, rice, cocoanuts, bread, and plantains from the different houses, and depositing them at the *Mandu*: whence they are carried in procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, and waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the Nād boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions are consumed by the persons composing the procession. The people of adjoining Grāmas or Nāds repeat the same ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from Nād to Nād, and at last expelled from the country."